

## Cause and Effect

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Category: Dragon Age

Genre: Family, Hurt-Comfort

Language: English

Status: In-Progress

Published: 2016-04-10 07:18:38

Updated: 2016-04-10 07:18:38

Packaged: 2016-04-27 20:42:42

Rating: T

Chapters: 1

Words: 1,574

Publisher: [www.fanfiction.net](http://www.fanfiction.net)

Summary: Hunter and Colette Trevelyan, a pair of closely-bonded cousins, sneak out to the forest for some downtime. When a crazed wolf interrupts their fun and leaves Colette with a severe injury, the two learn a devastating family secret: magic not only runs in their blood, but it has surfaced in one of them. DA:I two-shot.

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**><strong>\_\_\*\*Ch. 1: The Cause\*\*\_**

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><p>Growing up, I lived in an enormous family estate with my parents, grandparents, uncle and his wife, and my cousin Hunter. Our home left us far removed from even the nearest of towns, and children rarely accompanied the diplomats who visited. Hunter was my sole companion, and I was his.<p>

Despite only being cousins, Hunter and I often were mistaken for twinsâ€”probably because we took after our identical twin fathers. Just like them, Hunter and I bore auburn hair, freckled skin, and what my mother described as striking blue eyes. We acknowledged our physical similarities and played along when visitors referred to us as siblings. Hunter's father warned us to let the adults deal with the misunderstanding. Something about how we lacked the social grace to politely handle the situation?

This was assuming, of course, Hunter and I stuck around long enough for the mistake to occur. More often than not, we found ourselves in the forest, a good half mile or so from the estate's boundaries. Neither his nor my parents approved of our adventures into the wooded area, but they never stopped us.

As children, we enjoyed our adventures into the wild. As teenagers,

though, we desperately sought them. The closer Hunter and I drew to adulthood, the more political heaviness and responsibility lurked around every corner. Our schooling grew rigorous to the point where Hunter, once a proud student, began skipping out on lessons. My uncle and aunt praised my efforts to Father and Mother with obvious envy.

Truthfully, I cared little about school work or even making my parents proud. I only wanted to avoid confrontation as much as possible, so I tolerated the painful amount of work heaped upon me. When it came to my trouble subjects, Hunter jumped in to help me, all the while leaving his own work untouched.

In spite of the intense schooling, Hunter and I still managed to find time to kick back and relax. He and I would camp out near the town's main river. Sometimes we fished or hunted; mostly we messed around like we were young children again.

It was during one of our trips that we discovered something horrible. Hunter had a beautiful buck in sight, his arrow pointed directly at a vital spot. I watched from a distance. I never fancied hunting stunning creatures such as deer, but I also refused to spoil my cousin's fun. All the sudden, as I waited for Hunter's shot, I saw the deer's head jerk up. Hunter naturally saw it, too, so he let the arrow fly.

All I could see was the tail of the deer disappearing when a searing pain gripped my leg. My gaze dropped to my stricken limb instinctively. My blood ran cold. A pair of amber eyes tore into mine as fiercely as the fangs locked around my calf.

I cried out for Hunter, for help, for anything. My balance abandoned me, causing my body to hit the ground with a loud wolf snarled and launched itself at my torso. Rescue came in the form of an arrow whizzing past my line of sight, straight into the wolf's shoulder.

"Dammit!" Hunter cursed, readying another arrow while the beast gathered itself from the attack. "Colette, get out of there!"

The pain pulsing in my leg slowed my attempt at escape, but I somehow managed to crawl backwards and out of the wolf's range. I heard its rage-filled cries, along with the familiar sound of arrow pulled against tense string.

As suddenly as the assault began, it ended. The wolf disappeared into the trees and foliage, leaving my cousin and me alone. Hunter remained alert a moment longer, his arrow lingering on the spot where the wolf vanished. When he determined we were safe, he dropped to his knee and examined my torn calf.

The blood and pain bothered me less than the shredded bits of muscle-I couldn't tell if the inability to move came from that or simply shock. Hunter swore again, more under his breath than previously. I knew without looking at him how petrified he felt. He hated the sight of blood, as it left him queasy and unable to think properly.

Trying to hide my fear, I asked, "Do you think Annette can fix it?"

"Hell if I know," Hunter muttered, swallowing hard. "She's good, but your leg is completely ripped up."

I forced a grin and shoved his shoulder. "Don't exaggerate. It isn't **\*\*that\*\*** bad."

His lips twitched in an attempt to smile back, but they ultimately remained set in a scowl as he helped me to my feet. He rubbed the back of his neck.

"Can you walk if I help support you, or do you want me to carry you?"

I pondered his question. To self-assess the damage, I put a small amount of weight on my leg. I flinched within seconds of the trial and shook my head. Hunter, understanding, knelt down with his back to me. His eyes caught mine over his shoulder, so I gave him a reassuring smile while gently lowering myself onto his back.

All his years of tearing through the forest kept his legs steady as he stood, somewhat slumped to allow for my added weight. My cheek resting upon his head, I let out a wistful sigh. It had been a long time since we piggybacked, one of our childhood games we were forced to put aside with age.

Of course, he noticed my behavior and commented, "You've put on weight, you know."

I rolled my eyes. "You are so childish some times, Hunter. And yes, I have. In case you hadn't noticed, I have grown quite a bit since last you carried me."

"I'm also stronger, so I shouldn't feel such a difference," He retorted with a smug grin and a glint in his eyes.

Honestly, Hunter could be such a child when he wanted. I envied him a bit for that. In all the years, Hunter remained fairly untouched by adulthood. Perhaps it was because he skipped classes and ditched his responsibilities. Perhaps it was simply his type of personality. Either way, I wished it were as easy for me to cling to my immaturity.

"Thank you for carrying me," I said, voice wavering. "I'm sorry I ruined your hunt."

He snorted and, with no warning whatsoever, proceeded to drop me unceremoniously on the ground. My rear hit the ground somewhat painfully, and I delivered a spiteful glare to my cousin. Kneeling down in front of me, Hunter met my gaze with just as much fierceness. Were he a stranger, I might have missed the tiny hint of an apology in his eyes and the fear tightening his face.

He spoke firmly, "Don't you dare apologize, Colette. Especially not for that reason. I couldn't give a damn about my hunt; what I'm upset about is you being injured on my watch." His hand groped for mine uncertainly, so I took his and interlocked our fingers.

"It's not your fault, though," I assured him. "That wolf was mad, no doubt, and he came out of no where. You couldn't have sensed him any more than I could have. You couldn't have stopped this."

Hunter, stubborn as always, shook his head. "I know the sounds of the forest. I should have heard it coming. I shouldn't have been so focused on the damned deer." His eyes fell to my bloodied leg peeking out beneath my skirt. "We should keep moving. It's bleeding pretty bad, and we don't have anything to wrap it up in. Plus, we need to clean it or something, right? Damn, damn, damn..."

Gazing at the injury, I noted the damage looked worse than it had originally. Annette might be able to clean and dress the wound, but there was no doubt it would take a miracle for my leg to function normally again. I pressed my palm to my calf, soft but sturdy. As I focused on the pain and the blood trickling through my fingers, something clicked in my mind.

Words. Just a few, dancing around in my head. Blurry at first, then clearer. I barely registered Hunter speaking to me, asking me what I was doing. The words rose in my throat and slipped from my lips in a single breath.

Then, not a second later, my hands glowed with a benign light. Neither Hunter nor I spoke when the glow faded, revealing my leg in perfect condition. The only sign of the injury was the remaining blood painting my skin.

Blinking, I raised my eyes to meet Hunter's. We stared at each other for a moment, confused, shocked, and frightened.

"Colette," He whispered to me, "what did you just do?"

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><p><em>AN: \_So here is part one of a simple two-shot. This is the backstory of my two different (yet linked) Trevelyan inquisitors. I'll explain that a bit more after the next chapter, since I don't want to spoil anything. Anyways, I'm prepping material for a writing contest, so I don't know when I'll get to finishing/posting the conclusion to this. But it will definitely be coming.

Until then, thank you for reading. -LA

End  
file.